

Winter 2014

The Center Report



Ecumenical Center and International Residence

**An Intentional
International,
Intercultural
Interspiritual,
Living
Learning Community**



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A Call for Volunteers!

**ECIR needs you! Are you
interested in being a part of
our program committee?
Available to drive or
participate in ECIR events?**

email us: info@ecir.org

EXPANDING ECIR ON MICHIGAN'S CAMPUS



ECIR's Student Organization

Starting this semester, ECIR residents and staff are collaborating to network and connect the ECIR community with other international students and U.S. students at the University of Michigan. Through campus involvement, our vision is to create an open environment for those who do not know ECIR but are interested in a cross-cultural understanding between our international community and other student organizations on campus.

Running a student organization with the help of staff and students will help bridge a closer

connection between these communities.

In the coming months, we are excited to be partnering with UM's International Student Affairs Commission to participate in the annual Spring Around The World International Fair, which will take place on Saturday, March 15th. We will be sharing information with students and other multiethnic student groups on the Diag about countries and their society, religion, culture, and tradition.

Another social event will be planned in April to connect ECIR and other student organizations that are interested!

NEW RESIDENTS

We've started the Winter 2014 semester very excited to welcome 9 new residents to ECIR. This group includes undergraduate students, graduate students & visiting scholars studying either Economics, Epidemiology, Architecture, Education, Communications or Public Management. These residents are traveling from Spain, Argentina, Italy, India, Germany, and China. A warm welcome to Gonzalo, Mariela, Francesca, Lucia, Philip, Pascal, Zhuang, Asha and Laia!



NEW BOARD MEMBERS

STEVE KIME

LAMIA SHARMEEN

ASHISH SARKAR

SPOTLIGHT!

Ashish is an alumnus of the University of Michigan and is a former resident of ECIR ('71-'73). He received his Bachelors & Masters degrees in Engineering and had a successful international business career in Energy & Infrastructure industries. He recently retired but is quite active in several South East Michigan Non Profit organizations either as a volunteer or serving on the Board of Trustees. He lives with his wife Norma, who teaches at the University's School of Nursing. They have 3 grown children who live nearby in Michigan. He is originally from India.

ECIR

WELCOMING NEW STAFF

JESSICA GREENFIELD, Residential Program Manager



"Born and raised in Michigan, I completed my undergraduate studies in social work at Michigan State University with a minor in women's & gender studies and then went on to

complete my master's in social work from the University of Michigan with a focus on social policy in communities and social systems. I am an advocate for social justice, peace, and unity. I am extremely excited to join ECIR and would like to extend a warm *thank you* for the opportunity!"

AMY OKUMURA, Social Work Intern



"I was born in Kyoto, Japan, where I graduated from college and obtained a law degree. After spending almost 10 years in Michigan, I became a naturalized U.S. citizen. I am currently a grad-

uate student at the School Of Social Work with a focus on community organizing. My goal is to become a social worker who is sensitive to language & cultural differences in today's global world. In my spare time, I enjoy taking photographs and playing with my kitten.

SPRING BREAK REVIEW



DAWN FARMS

Located in Ypsilanti, Dawn Farms is a Michigan addiction treatment center. On Tuesday, March 4th, residents who attended heard the history of the organization, listened to 1 or 2 clients share their experience in life and at the Farm, and they also had the opportunity to tour the farm and facility .



MCLENNAN GARDENS MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL & PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Residents visited the Maple Syrup Festival at McLennan Gardens in Manchester on Saturday, March 8th. Residents were served a pancake breakfast , they learned how maple sugar is made, observed the tree tapping process, toured the sugar shack, and tried products made from this unique North American sweetener.

ZIIBIWING CENTER OF ANISHINABEK CULTURE & LIFEWAYS

On Wednesday, March 5th, residents visited the Ziibiwing Center, a preserve of the culture, diversity, and spirit of the Great Lakes Anishinabek and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. The visit included a guided tour of the Diba Jimooyung permanent exhibit, lunch with director Bruce Martin, a culture kit session, and a dream catcher craft class.



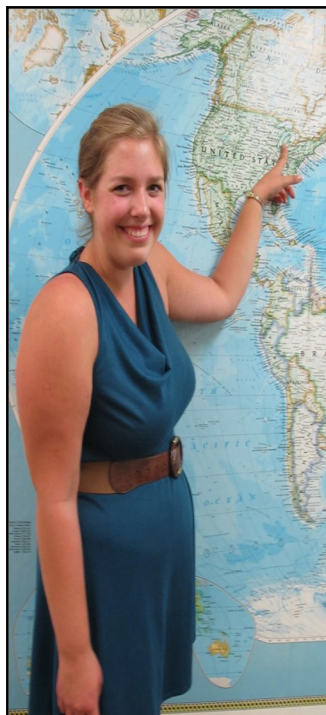
“Why International Friends Are the Best”

AMANDA MROCZEK

Living in ECIR has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had during my time in college. It is amazing to be around such a diverse subset of people. I have been enlightened as to why having international friends is one of the greatest things. In every interaction, I cannot take much of anything for granted. Simple things, like figuring out what temperature it is, have turned into complex math conversions ($^{\circ}\text{C} \times 9/5 + 32 = ^{\circ}\text{F}$ (in case you're wondering)). Being surrounded by such diverse people has helped me to become more aware of how ingrained culture is in every exchange, word, and even number. There is never a status quo, which is great. I am continually made aware of the sometimes ridiculous things – like Groundhog's day – that are ingrained in American culture.

I always discover something new in almost every interaction that I have. At ECIR I have learned random things ranging from the fact that some people spell yogurt with an “h” to the complexities of international communication and trying to feel fully understood while speaking your non-native language. No matter whom I talk to, I always gain some insight into their perspective and how it can be quite culturally constructed, especially through the use and structure of their language. Last semester, I was talking with Monserrat (a former resident), telling her how I need to practice speaking Spanish more, so I can become fluent. She then

told me how in Spain students typically talk about how they need to “study more” in order to become more proficient in a foreign language; they focus more on studying the language rather than practicing it with other people. This idea intrigued me, as I had never thought of a different way of learning a language other than practicing it. It is interesting variances such as these that always remind me how many ways of life there are in the world and increase my appreciation of different cultures and how they think. These differences excited me and open my eyes to all of the amazing people around me. Places like ECIR have helped me gain a greater understanding of other ideologies, people and the world through the opportunity to meet amazing people.



BELOW: Putri receives a handmade card at the White Elephant gift exchange in December



ECIR WISH LIST

- Toasters
- Microwaves
- NEW CARPET
- New bed sheets (twin size)
- New pillows
- Computer and/or dining chairs
- Wash cloths
- Kitchen pots & pans
- Coffee for the Café

We accept donations of new or used items (in good condition) and money to purchase



THE GOOD STUFF

ROSANA LEE

I looked at my car in disbelief; my father was able to fit all of my belongings in my tiny sedan. After more than five years of living in Ann Arbor, my whole life was stuffed there. It may be counterintuitive but I saw this as a sign of having lived a good life in Michigan. Part of the reason why I do not own too many things is that I have been blessed in so many different ways. Ever since I came to the University of Michigan as an international student, I was able to find accommodations with great roommates who already had all the essentials. I have always lived in places that were already furnished, so aside from a bed and a plastic dresser for my clothes, I did not need much else. Friends housed me when I did not have a home, fed me when I was hungry, and helped me keep warm during the harsh winters. They also taught me about all sorts of things including football, baseball, and skiing. I learned a lot from them, laughed a lot with them, and worked hard alongside them.



ABOVE: Rosana & Lee at the OSU game!

Among those blessings, I count having had the opportunity to work for ECIR: first as an intern, next as a temp, and last as the Residence Life Manager. I had the pleasure to work with the former director, Roger Pohl, as well as the current one, Bruce Martin. The volunteers are amazing! It was so much fun to be able to collaborate with all of them. Also, I enjoyed working with my colleagues. They are extremely kind and genuinely care about their work and the residents. It was a great joy to be able to come to work every day thinking that the work that we did mattered. And the residents, they felt like they were family.

I could see in them traits that reminded me of people dear to me. Talking with them made me think of the comfort of being at home. Through my connection to ECIR, not only I made really good friends but also I met my significant other during a visit to the center the fall after my internship there. Years after that, we got engaged and are now ready to start a life together in DC. Driving down to Washington was bittersweet. On the one hand, I was excited about getting married but on the other, it was tough to let go. As I crossed the state border, I thought of the things that I was leaving behind. It took a little while to realize that not all is gone and lost. I have the memories, the things I have learned, the feeling of incredible kindness and of being blessed beyond measure. I want to thank each and every one of you who have made my time in Ann Arbor such a wonderful chapter in my life. I assure you that I am not the only one whose life you have touched. Thanks to you, I have come to know that I am taking the good stuff with me; lots of it.

GIVE APPRECIATED STOCK!

"If you itemize your deductions & own appreciated stock that you have held for more than one year, by donating the stock to charity you can deduct the stock's value as a charitable contribution and avoid paying taxes on the stock's gain. Just make a gift of appreciated stock by the end of the calendar year."

GIVING

"By combining our donations, large and small, we create a legacy to advance our vision to expand our Center, to extend our program as a living learning community promoting understanding and peace between diverse peoples and cultures of the world."

—Bruce Martin, Director

DONATE AN IRA DISTRIBUTION

"For the tax year 2014, retirees can redirect all or part of their required distribution to charity without paying tax on the withdrawal. Making this tax free transfer can help retirees who want to support a charity but who don't itemize their deductions and as a result can't deduct their charitable contributions. Qualified charitable distributions must be paid directly from the IRA to the charity by the year's end."

**SHARE
WITH US!**

ECIR is looking for residents, supporters and volunteers who are interested in writing about their experience. Submissions can be emailed to info@ecir.org. We will do our best to utilize all submissions so that future residents and supporters can enjoy your story too!